BOB NEATE
No 20. APRIL 82

THE CROSBY VOICE

NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY
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ISSUE NO.20 APRIL 1982

Hello again,
and belated greetings for the new year. New year! Here it is the start of April already.
As I have begun many letters recently, I must commence this issue of the Crosby Voice with an apology. As you probably realize, we are way over the usual publication date with the magazine; the reason for this, quite simply, is that there just hasn't been time until this moment to sit down at the typewriter. The pressures of moving house combined with increased responsibilities at work have absorbed every moment of my spare time.

This may mean that this year we could only be producing three issues of The Crosby Voice. Here is the February issue out in April only a few weeks before the May number is due! We'll just have to see how the year progresses as to what happens. But rest assured, if we do have only two more major newsletters in 1982, each will be bigger and heavier than any before.

One of the changes for the new year has been the purchasing of a new electric typewriter for the Machliss family, which, as you can see, has a much smaller typeface than the machine used previously.

This will allow us to increase the content of each issue without adding too many extra pages (and extra pages = extra cost). I hope that the smaller type does not provide reading problems for any of our members.

We must open the year on a sad note with information on the passing of two very well known identities in the Crosby world. The first, a collector of international repute, Henry Hollow; the second a man familiar to virtually every 78 collector in Melbourne, Nevin Walker of the Vintage Record Shop.

Although I did not know Henry Hollow personally, we only met once and that, sadly, at the funeral of the late Keith Hyde, I did know of him through his writings in the various Crosby magazines over the years. Under the heading of 'The Cynical Hollow Laugh' Henry enlivened many a page of Ralph Harding's 'Crosby Collector' magazine in the 1960's. If space permits, we will reproduce one of Henry's articles later in this issue. A tribute from Henry's close friend Gordon Wall definitely does appear.

Nevin Walker I did know, as did many Melbourne collectors over the years. It was through Nevin's shop that I, back in 1962, launched into record collecting in a serious way. Still at school in those

days, I used to ride my bike to Nevin's shop every Saturday where I purchased my first Crosby/Whiteman 78's: "Get out and get under the moon/Evening Star" and "Mississippi Mud/Mary". I can still remember how excited I was. I first learnt of Nevin's shop through an article in the Melbourne Sun newspaper, an article which I kept over the years and which I reproduce here in this issue of the Crosby Voice for your interest. You'll find it on pages13, 14 and 15 along with some photographs of the Vintage Record Shop.

Strangely, just one month short of twenty years to the day, this Society featured in a major write up in the same Sun Newspaper and for interstate and overseas members, we reproduce that write up on pages 5,6 and 10. One of the most important pieces of publicity we have received over the years, it resulted in many new members joining the club, and I would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome them now.

Once again, we have a lot to (we hope) interest you in this issue. Several new LP's have appeared overseas and one handy reissue here. More about those under 'New Record Releases'.

On pages 16 - 21 we feature a reproduction of an article that appeared in an unfamiliar (to me) U.S. magazine 'American Classic Screen' which covered an interview between Bing and film buff Bob Deflores.

On page 22 we reproduce two unusual first day covers featuring Bing.

On page 25 we show you a most unusual decanter produced to honour the 41st Crosby Pro-Am Golf Tournament.

And on pages 29 and 30 we have some more of the ever-popular 'Collectors Items'.

Let us begin, as is the custom, with a round up of what's to come.

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FUTURE FUNCTIONS
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MONDAY APRIL 19TH - FILM EVENING - WHAT A MOVIE!

At last we are able to screen a movie that has been on everybody's short list for years. Along with "Pennies from Heaven", "The Big Broadcast of 1932" and "Too Much Harmony", this film has been the most requested by members. And the title is....TA DAH TA DAH TA DAH DAH.....

GOING HOLLYWOOD

GOING HOLLYWOOD

GOING HOLLYWOOD

Bing's super-duper all singing all dancing all spectacle MGM musical from 1933. The film that introduced such Crosby Clasics as "After Sundown", "Temptation", "We'll make hay while the sun shines" and "Beautiful Girl". Don't miss this one. You won't regret it.

Our supporting programme on the night will consist of several short subjects from the 1930's and 40's. Although the titles haven't been selected yet, you can be sure that there'll be something for everyone.

As usual, Crosby records and books will be raffled on the night.

Venue, as always, is the theatrette of the Mobil Building, 2 City Rd South Melbourne, right round the back of the new circular Art Centre Theatre which is opening in June.

Starting time (that is for the movies) will be 7.30 pm SHARP so please be on time and don't spoil it for the people who do make the effort. Between 7.00 and 7.15 is the ideal time to arrive.

ENTRY:

Members: $2
Member families: $5
Pensioners and Junior Members: $1

Temporary membership for non-members: $4 per head.

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PLEASE NOTE THESE DATES NOW

REMAINING FUNCTIONS FOR

1982

MONDAY JUNE 21ST - Combined function with Sinatra Society
MONDAY AUGUST 16TH - Film and Music Evening
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 11TH - Night at Tikki and Johns Music Hall
MONDAY OCTOBER 18TH - Film and Music Evening
MONDAY DECEMBER 6TH - Film Evening

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PAST FUNCTIONS

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MONDAY DECEMBER 7TH, 1981 - FILM EVENING

In what must have been our most successful function ever, more than 100 members and visitors turned up to view a great double feature movie show: "Paramount on Parade" from 1930 and "College Humour" from 1933. Being the last function of the year, we had a load of special prizes to give away, and the winners included:

Joe Czynski - The Bing Crosby Mirror
Ted Paradissis- rare 45 "Do you hear what I hear"
Joe Stevens and Gordon Kirby - Tacoma Tribute discs
Wilma Baxter, Audrey Evans and Girvan Paterson - Crosby LP's.

The evening was a great send-off for 1981.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 15TH, 1982 - FILM AND MUSIC EVENING

Around 50 brave souls turned up on a boiling hot Melbourne summer evening expecting to enjoy the coolness of the Mobil theatrette air conditioning for a couple of hours. No dice. Mobil's air conditioning, like many a Melbournian had collapsed from heat exhaustion on the day!

Nonetheless, it was a most enjoyable evening. Bill Bennett provided us with another selection of Crosby music on tape and after interval we were all entertained by our first screening of "Rhythm on the Range" which proved to be an extremely well-scripted, well produced Crosby movie, well above the average for the period. Those who looked quickly were treated to a 10 second glimpse of Roy Rogers, just beginning his film career.

Other highlights of the night was the raffling of Bing's 5 LP Musical Autobiography set (won by Jim McManus) plus eight special 1982 Crosby Calendars donated by the Bing Crosby Historical Society. The latter are a unique item featuring a different Crosby photo for every month of the year. Unfortunately, no more copies are available for Australia. Members are asked to write direct to Ken Twiss of the BCHS of which the address appears later in the newsletter.

Ten advance copies of the BCHS 1982 tribute disc were also all sold on the night.

cont.../7

The Sun, Tuesday, Feb. 23, 1982

Bing~still the king

(Please turn to page 10 for the text of this article.)

(Past Functions Continued)

SUNDAY MARCH 14TH - CHICKEN BBQ

In almost perfect weather conditions (warm sun, cool breeze) about fifty members and friends were treated to a delicious chicken BBQ at the home of Maureen and Wally Carson in Brighton.

As the entire affair was catered for, there was virtually nothing for members to do, except relax and enjoy themselves. A number of Crosby records were raffled on the day as were a dozen bottles of beer, a flagon of wine (donated by Wally),a cute pyjama case (donated by Maureen) and several other sundry items.

Our thanks to Jim McManus, Les Saynor and Keith Dorman for their help in organizing the function, and of course, special thanks to Maureen and Wally for allowing us to use their attractive home.

Our chicken BBQ was the first of many functions at which we will be subsidizing the cost for members. Read on.

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NEW CLUB SERVICE - SUBSIDIZED SOCIAL FUNCTIONS AND RECORD BUYING

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Always looking for new ways to serve the members of the Society, we have hit upon the idea of subsidizing the cost of social functions (such as the chicken BBQ above) and also, the Tikki and Johns night later in the year. This seems to be a reasonable way to give back some of the money that you as members put into the club every year.

In addition to subsidizing social functions, we will also, in future, be buying Crosby LP's and supply them to members at reduced prices. For instance, at our February 15th meeting, we were able to sell copies of the most recent Spokane releases for around $6.00 each! This is $3 to $4 cheaper than in shops. Unfortunately, due to logistical problems, records will only be available to members at meetings at this time. We can't offer a mail service as yet. However, we are looking into ways around this problem and may overcome it in the next few months. If you have any currently available Crosby LP's that you would like us to buy for you and you can guarantee to pick them up at our April 19th meeting, please let us know and we will endeavour to get them.

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HENRY HOLLOW 1923 - 1981
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TWO TRIBUTES

From Gordon Wall, Adelaide.

Crosby collectors throughout the world will be saddened by the passing of Henry Hollow on December 23rd, 1981, aged 58.

Henry was famous throughout Crosby circles not only for his great record collection, but also for his humourous articles published from time to time in Ralph Harding's Crosby Collector and Al Sutton's Bingang.

He was well liked, not only in Australia, but world wide. A much travelled man, he visited collectors all over England and the USA and fascinated them with his ready wit and tall stories of his travels. When I heard of his passing, the words of Al Sutton summed up my feelings and I quote: "Another good man gone and there weren't enough to begin with!"

But we were lucky to know you when you were here, Henry.

From Vernon Taylor, Portland.

Henry Hollow was a refreshing person to know. I had the rare pleasure of running around Portland with him on two visits he paid to us.

His wit was a caustic caution and his brain was first rate. He was acerbic and even brittle, sometimes; he could even be abrasive when the moment demanded it. I've kept all his letters from over the many years we corresponded and they reflect his character. Gordon Wall once told me that Henry polished his letters to make them flash and sparkle, but whatever he did, his letters were always enjoyable, never boring.

He is going to be missed a very long time - and not just in Australia.

On the following page, we reprint one of Henry's "Hollow Laugh" articles, in this case taken from the May 1968 issue of 'The Crosby Collector'.

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THE HOLLOW LAUGH

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We are sometimes asked whatever became of some well-known record collectors who have apparently faded from the scene. This is a story about one of those collectors of Bing Crosby recordings.

When Harry Keen began collecting Bing in the early 30's, he was quite a young man, employed by a firm which manufactured spokes for automobile wheels. With the automobile here to stay, his future was assured. But Harry got into the habit of attending all the screenings of the latest Bing Crosby films, seeing them several times until he was thoroughly conversant with the entire production. This caused his prolonged absence from his place of employment and ultimately led to his dismissal. This taught Harry a lesson he never forgot and from that time on Harry never held a permanent job of any kind. This enabled him to see all the Bing Crosby films in between casual jobs and to chase after all the recordings he needed to complete his collection.

About this time, Harry started courting an attractive young girl with a rather strict up-bringing. When Harry began calling at her home with his portable gramophone and a selection of the latest Bing records, he met with some disapproval from the parents of his girl-friend and the brief romance was abruptly ended. I must point out that the low opinion of recorded music held by parents at this time, is outside the experience of young people in this day and age.

It was not so very long after this that one day as Harry was cantering home from the record store, clutching a bundle of the latest Bing records in one hand and controlling his motor with the other, he felt one of his precious discs slipping from his grasp. Trying to save the fragile shellac, Harry lost conrol of his motor-cycle and was decantered on to the pavement. As a result of this mishap, Harry ended up in hospital suffering from a slipped disc, a condition from which he never recovered.

When Harry finally returned home, he was confronted with a further calamity. Poor Harry had built himself a music room in the attic of his old home, so that he could listen to Bing undisturbed. But the weight of so many Shellac recordings had proved too great for the beams of the old house and the entire attic had collapsed into the room below, destroying most of the irreplaceable Bing Crosby collection.

(concluded on page 11)

THE Old Groaner died in 1977 but the voice still croons on for a bunch of Melbourne Bing Crosby fans.

By TREVOR ROBBINS

They are serious about the musical outpourings of the Crosby recording career, which spanned from 1926 to 1977.

Melbourne advertising man Bob Matchliss was the catalyst in the ultimate birth of the Victorian Bing Crosby Society.

Bob was born in 1944, the year the Old Groaner was recording tunes like "Begin the Beguine" and "Accentuate the Positive".

He caught the Crosby bug at age six when he heard the Crosby rendition of "The Teddy Bears Picnic". Now he's hooked for life on the voice that has recorded more than 1800 commerical tunes, appeared in several dozen motion pictures and hundreds of radio and television programs.

The Crosby magic really started to work on Bob Matchliss in the 1960s when a Melbourne radio station started playing a lot of re-released Crosby material.

"That was when I really discovered Crosby. Shortly after that I started working and could afford to buy records.

"I began picking up Crosby records and building up my collection," he said.

Bob soon found he was not alone in his admiration for the singer. In 1970 he put to air the first of 38 Bing Crosby radio programs on Melbourne's 3ZZ.

Listener reaction was enormous and Bob soon found he had so many kindred spirits out there that they banded together and formed the Society in August 1977.

One of the basic objectives of the society was to invite Bing Crosby, at the time still churning out records as he had every year since 1926, to become an honorary life member.

Sadly, just two months after the Society was formed Crosby was dead. A few days before his death he put down his last track, "Sail Away From Norway".

Bing's widow, Kathryn, accepted the honorary life membership intended for her late husband.

According to Bob Matchliss, the Society has grown beyond all expectations with a membership now approaching 300.

"Our membership is truly an international one with members in England, USA, Holland, Brazil, New Zealand, Canada and Japan," he said.

The Victorian Society is not the only Crosby society. There are three in the USA and two in the UK.

The entire Crosby recording output, not counting alternate takes, lasts a bit over 106 hours. The Society has it all on 53 90-minute tapes and lends them to members along with video cassettes of Bing's films made from 1929 to 1964.

Crosby's long recording career got cracking in 1926 when he recorded a tune called "I've Got The Girl" for Columbia.

He was merely the "vocal chorus" on that record featuring the Charleston Serenaders.

A couple of months later Crosby cut his first side with the legendary Paul Whiteman orchestra but still had no credit on the label.

The first billing Crosby received was in 1929 when he put down on wax a 78 rpm "I Kiss Your Hand, Madame".

As historic as that record may be a copy of the original U.S. issue in good condition fetches only about $10.

To many, Crosby is mainly associated with his smash hit recording of "White Christmas".

Crosby watchers, particularly fans like Bob Matchliss, are quick to remind you of Bing the jazz singer and point to the hot, swinging vocals he made with Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer.

Members of the local Society are fascinated with the singing voice of Crosby and how this man with the cowlick hairpiece was able to develop a multi-million dollar industry around him.

Bob Matchliss sees Crosby as a complex man and an astute businessman.

"The Crosby personality was refined by a lot of people. He had excellent writers working for him in those early pre-television days," he said.

Matchliss declined to pick a favorite Crosby but preferred to name a particular period, 1933, which he says was an exciting time in the crooner's discography.

That was the year Bing made records like "Blue Prelude", "Home On The Range" and "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking", all of which rate highly in Bob's estimation.

It's not only the voice that appeals to Crosby fans. Bing was a marvellous whistler and could pucker up and blow like a musical instrument.

His last recording featured the famous Crosby whistle.

Jim McManus, a foundation member of the Society, first discovered Crosby in the 1930s and even took to crooning around the house.

The former owner of a vintage record bar and now retired, Jim likes the Bing of the 30s and 40s.

"Bing seemed to be an easy-going bloke and had an easy, relaxed way of singing. I would have loved to be able to stand up and sing as easily as he did.

"I met Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee but I missed out on meeting Bing. It's one of my biggest regrets," Jim said.

To new Society member John Millard, a meter reader on pressure control equipment, Crosby is the epitome of relaxation.

"I like the feeling of relaxation he gives. Bing doesn't turn me on as an actor or dancer, though. The Crosby of 1933 — that's the year I like best," John said.

The Crosby stalwarts who meet in Melbourne eight times a year to listen to new material (which is constantly being discovered) and enjoying old Crosby movies have no doubt his music will endure.

For those under the spell of the Crosby magic and looking for a deeper commitment for their appreciation of the man the Victorian Bing Crosby Society can be reached through P.O. Box 422, South Melbourne, 3205.

With his career ended, his romance destroyed, his health impaired, his home damaged, his records destroyed, plus a small dent in the tank of his motor-cycle, it is not difficult to see why he gave up record collecting. I only hope that Bing never reads this sorry tale - he would be most distressed to learn of the havoc he has wrought in the life of one of his most dedicated collectors.

By now you have probably guessed the title of this story - "IT MUST BE TRUE".

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NEW RECORD RELEASES
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A COUPLE OF SONG AND DANCE MEN - Fred Astaire & Bing

A welcome re-issue on the local scene is this 1975 recording featuring Bing and Fred. The two re-recorded some of their earlier hits (the title song for one) and several newer songs (The Entertainer) The record is only available on LP and only through World Record Club, but anyone can buy from them. The cost, a very reasonable Au$6.99. Reference number: R 10151. Write for more details to: The World Record Club, 605 Camberwell Road, Hartwell, Victoria 3124. Australia.

SOME FINE OLD CHESTNUTS - Japanese MCA VIM-5589
This album is the same as the original Decca release from the 1950's. It features Bing with Buddy Cole.

WHITE CHRISTMAS - Japanese MCA VIM-7277
Another welcome reissue, this LP features the original recordings from the 1954 movie of the same title. With Bing are Danny Kaye and Peggy Lee.

THE BEST OF BING CROSBY - Japanese MCA VIM-7513
A collection of Crosby 78's including Night and Day, Swinging on a star, Too-ra-loo-ra, Autumn leaves, I kiss your hand madame, Sweet Lelani, Now is the hour, You are my sunshine, Home on the range, Danny Boy, Begin the Beguine, Alla en el rancho grande, You belong to my heart and, of course, White Christmas.

BING CROSBY - ORIGINAL FAVOURITES - French MCA 202-937-241
Another collection of familiar titles although this one includes a couple not commonly on LP - Oh what a beautiful morning and People will say we're in love, both recorded during a musician's strike in 1943 with choral backing only.

BING CROSBY AND FRIENDS - UK Magic label AWE 3
An interesting collection of tracks taken from radio and featuring Bing with a variety of artists including Ethel Merman, Fred Astaire, The Andrews Sisters, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Groucho Marx and others. I haven't heard it yet but the disc sounds great on paper.

"SENTIMENTAL" BING CROSBY - UK Decca Elite TAB 31
A collection of 1975/76 material , mostly from the 'Feels Good Feels Right' LP but with a couple of tracks only previously available on the double LP BING album issued shortly after his death: That Old Black Magic, At Last, and I'm getting sentimental over you.

REMEMBERING THE 40'S - Readers Digest UK
An 8 LP boxed set featuring music of the decade. Bing is represented by 16 common tracks.

LIVE AT THE LONDON PALLADIUM - Dutch United Artists K-Tel 172/98550
The 1976 Palladium concert, no longer available in Australia.

BING & FRANK SINATRA ON THE RADIO
This is not a new LP but this seems to be a good place to mention it. The disc, produced by the International Sinatra Society two or three years ago, features two early 1950's radio broadcasts featuring Bing and Frank. A few hundred copies of this LP were pressed originally, but Bill Weeden of the Sinatra Society informs me that only about 30 remain.

The cost is Au$7.00 plus the following postage:
$2.00 within Victoria, $4.00 to other states or for surface mail overseas, $6.00 for SAL delivery to the USA or UK and $12.00 for delivery by air mail overseas.

Please pay (within Australia) by personal cheque, and overseas, by bank draft drawn in Australian Dollars and made payable to "Sinatra Society" on a bank within Australia.

Please address all enquiries and orders to:

The International Sinatra Society, P.O. Box 123, Clayton, Victoria 3168, Australia.

The Sun, Sat., March 24, 1962

JUST FOR THE RECORD

SIX-YEAR-OLD Lovell Pinter hears a record from his grandfather's day. With him is Mr Nevin Walker.

By KEITH DUNSTAN

ONE of the charming features of the nineteen-sixties is its affection for Edwardiana.

Some people collect vintage lamp - posts, some twiddly bits of vintage cast-iron, and there are those who collect vintage trams and vintage railway carriages, but now Melbourne has something different.

At 610 High-st., Prahran, there is a Vintage Record Shop.

At once you can see there is something most peculiar about it. There are no mood music covers with pictures of gorgeous girls, no twist covers with pictures of gorgeous girls, no Brahms symphony covers with pictures of gorgeous girls.

Instead there are covers decorated with the old HMV dog, little Sentimental Bloke-type angels, and, of course, some splendid, dignified pictures of Madame Melba in profile.

The proprietor of this business is Nevin Walker. He says the vintage record market is on the move world-wide. Overseas some precious old records have even brought as much as £100.

But chiefly the enthusiasts go for old Melba discs, Carusos of 1902 and 1903, early jazz records like those of King Oliver, Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke.

Harry Lauder

Some go for old music hall discs, Harry Lauder, George Robey or Dan Leno, and there's one man who has as his great aim to collect every record ever made by Bing Crosby. Nevin Walker doesn't know actually how many records Mr Crosby has made but they run into hundreds and hundreds.

It is possible to play the records on the premises, but the record players are fitted with earphones. Mr Walker finds that it does not pay to mix a vintage Crosby man with a vintage Caruso man.

One thing has happened though that is hurtful to the vintage record business. Mr Walker does not keep one 33 rpm record in his shop, but now many of the record companies are bringing out LPs of vintage records.

For example, you can buy 15 old Caruso records all on the one sparkling new LP. A little skulduggery, too, had been done to the records to make them sound sweeter.

But Mr Walker said fortunately this hadn't altogether been the ruin of his business. There were still the connoisseurs, the true-blue collectors, who wanted the real article. They were true collectors. Like collectors of stamps or snuff boxes, possibly some weren't terribly interested in the subject itself. Just to have it was the thing.

I asked what happened when one put a 1903 Caruso record on one's giant stereophonic twin speaker record player with all its tweeters, woofers and what nots? Mr Walker shuddered. That sort of thing was never, never done.

The true vintage enthusiast used a gadget which was called a top-cut filter. This reduced all the sounds to the limited range which was used when the recordings were made.

But to get the best results the vintage record enthusiast should use vintage equipment. And Nevin Walker said it was downright amazing but the old records sounded best with one of those huge old phonograph horns. He knew one vintage man who even brought out a phonograph horn specially from England.

The most expensive record that Nevin Walker has in his shop is 25/, but it's fascinating to go through some of his overseas catalogues. You can get Bing Crosby (late twenties) singing "Let's Do It" for £3/15/, a slightly scratched Giovanni Zenatello (1903) for £7/7/. Zenatello was big in 1903. He was the original Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly.

Or you could pick up a Boris Chaliapin "I Am Suffocating" for £7/7/.

It would be impossible at this stage to gain high prices for vintage records in Australia, but things are on the move in England and the U.S.

Nevin Walker says some of the more valuable records take on their value through their peculiarities, like a stamp with the head of King George upside down. There are Melbas, Carusos, or Crosby records that never were issued. Maybe the artist paused half-way through the recording and said something outrageous to the conductor. They were never issued, but now the collector gives the earth for the original.

For example, legend had it that Jean De Reske, the great tenor of the pre-Caruso era, made two records that were never issued. Now one collector in Paris claimed that he had one of these records. He kept it in a bank vault. So far interested parties had been allowed to look at the label, but no one had been allowed to play it.

Enthusiast

But that's the thing with vintage records. When the enthusiast brings out his 50-year-old discs and sharpens up his fibre needle he is bestowing a rare honor like opening a bottle of vintage brandy. Nevin Walker then brought out a Caruso record, dated 1903. The label: Gramophone-Typewriter Ltd.

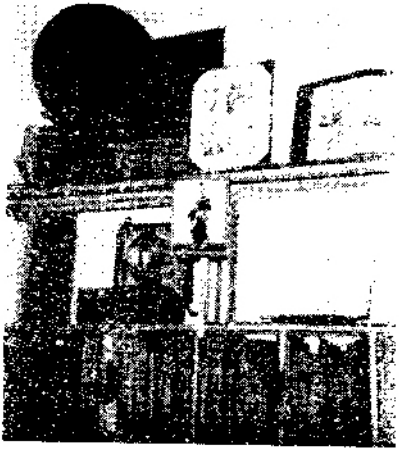
Gramophone - Typewriter was the forerunner to HMV. The London manager sold typewriters as a sideline because he thought gramophone records couldn't possibly last.

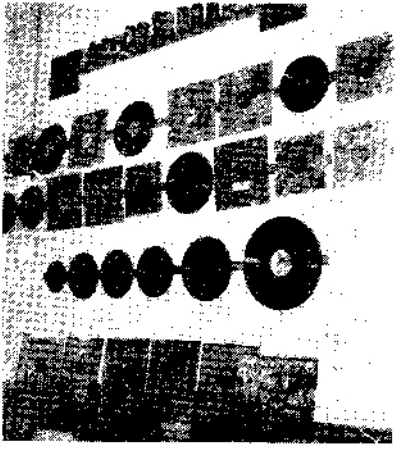
So Nevin put in the fibre needle, set the machine going and wheezily, dimly out of the past came Caruso himself to a plonking piano accompaniment.

Next we had a Paul Whiteman record dating from the late twenties. The vocalist was Bing Crosby, but he was so small time then he didn't rate a mention on the label. The song was "My Baby Don't Mean 'Maybe' Now." Unquestionably it was the young greaser himself, groaning perhaps a little more than need be.

To be perfectly honest, I thought both records sounded absolutely frightful. But then I'm only just setting out as a vintage collector. Nevin Walker says it is amazing how you get used to these vintage noises.

Give me a month or two of listening and I'll never look at an LP again.





CLASSIC
VOLUME THREE, NUMBER TWO
BING – A LAST INTERVIEW
MORE ON JEANETTE MACDONALD
CHARLIE CHAN AND THE O.W.I.

A rare shot of the young Bing, approximately 1925, with his collegiate band before his arrival in Hollywood. Al Rinker, who would follow Bing to California and become one of the Rhythm Boys, is shown in the center of the back row. (Courtesy Hollywood Revue)

A quiet time spent with the old crooner . . . an easy afternoon of movies and reminiscences . . . interviewed by a prominent film preservationist just a few months before Bing's death.

(Special thanks are due to Ronald Fields for his assistance in the writing of this article.)

Bing's first film was "Two Plus Fours," an RKO Pathe short from 1929. Pictured here are the Rhythm Boys: Harry Barris (e holding the cap; while Al Rinker and Bing (extreme right) look on. DeFloras is still hunting for his lost film. (courtesy Bob DeFloras)

The author with Bing on the day of the interview, July 28, 1977. (courtesy Bob DeFloras)

The 3M Corporation, which sponsors the annual Bing Crosby Pebble Beach Clambake, runs old and rare movies to their employees as part of a film series. Because I had loaned 3M some of my films for this activity, they contacted me about giving Bing a special surprise. For the 1977 Pebble Beach affair, 3M and I presented Bing with a rare film clip showing the old cronies, his mother and father hitting golf balls at the El Rancho Santa Fe. Crosby was delighted. He told 3M he wanted to meet me and collect some more old films.

And that was how I met Bing.

First, I received a letter from Bing in May of 1977. In the following months, we exchanged letters and phone calls trying to arrange a suitable time and proper procedure for our meeting. Well, I was to be in California in July, and luck had it that Bing would be there, too, at his Hillsborough mansion in Northern California. We fixed an exact date — July 28. Alan Fisher, Bing's majordomo, would call me at my friends' house once I landed in San Francisco.

I have been a fan of Bing Crosby's for over twenty-[illegible] even before I began collecting films. In fact, I [illegible] rounding up motion pictures primarily because [illegible] for Bing's work. My admiration for his art grew [illegible] expanding collection of his films, so you can [illegible] excitement at the prospect of spending an afternoon [illegible] him.

I landed in San Francisco the night of the 27th of July [illegible] friends picked me up from the airport and we spent [illegible] warm summer evening in their comfortable home. I [illegible] restlessly, anticipating the next day with Bing. I [illegible] bright summer morning and a gentle wind that came off [illegible] bay and cooled the hot sun just enough to make the

Francisco air pleasant. After breakfast we waited for the phone to ring, passing the time in casual talk. At 10:30 A.M. the call came. It was Alan Fisher ready with directions to Crosby's Hillsborough estate. I jotted down the instructions, borrowed my friend's car and off I went.

Hillsborough is a wealthy community, about fifteen minutes south of San Francisco, sitting in a wooded world. I drove my car down the tortuous, narrow, tree-covered streets heading for the Crosby estate. It occurred to me while I drove through the thick green countryside that this was California at the peak of its two-year drought, but the plant life in Hillsborough knew nothing of the great thirst. Tall and ancient redwood and eucalyptus trees lined the streets, their boughs stretched overhead. The houses of Hillsborough sat back from the road, blocked by great trees and rich foliage. Sometimes I could see past the natural guard to lovely cut lawns and perfectly shaped hedges and tall greenery kept and spoiled. The few houses visible from the road stood huge and stately with lavish architecture, some Spanish motif, some Tudor.

Finally, I reached the Crosby mansion. I could not see his house from the street. Tall walls and a stretch of gigantic trees blocked my view. The walls approached the driveway from opposite directions connected by a magnificently embellished wrought-iron gate. Outside the gate, on the driver's side of the car, an intercom with a calling button sat atop a single pole. I pushed the button. A voice with a heavy Queen's English accent, which I recognized as belonging to Alan Fisher, asked, "Bob DeFlores?" "Yes!" I said. Not another word, just the sound of a straining motor as the elaborate iron gate swung slowly open. I said thanks to no one and drove up the long driveway.

The forest-like vegetation continued beyond the gates for another two hundred and fifty yards or so. The giant sequoias and sweet-smelling eucalyptus trees backed right up to the driveway on both sides. Where the forest ended, the perfectly-cut lawn began with its border of exquisitely dressed bushes. Not a blade of grass or a leaf on the hedge was out of place. At the end of the flat spread of velvet green stood his beautiful home, an old French Provincial mansion. It was cream-colored and rectangular. Long narrow windows ran down the front of the home and balconies that sported wrought iron balustrades bubbled out from the walls. I parked my car and walked to the door. I was very nervous.

I knocked with definite trepidation on the large Spanish style doors. (Later I found out that the doors were a gift from William Randolph Hearst.) They swung open immediately. Bing's adviser, counselor, butler, and business manager, Alan Fisher, stood in the opening. He introduced himself to me and I to him. His cherubic face wore a neatly kept Vandyke beard. He was about six feet tall and quite heavy for his forty some years. Behind him and off to the side a few [illegible] stood Bing Crosby. He was smaller than I expected, about five feet eight inches I would guess, and very little hair covered his head. Absent was his golf hat and pipe. He wore a wrinkled sports sweater and slightly wrinkled pants, and he stood with typical and unmistakable nonchalance. His calm demeanor settled my nervousness immediately.

"Bob, it's a pleasure to meet you," he said, with his rich voice and familiar [illegible] the "Bob." "I thoroughly enjoyed your film clip of me, Mom, and Dad. I hope you brought some more with you today." Tucked under my arm I carried two and a half hours of rare footage of him. He was delighted and led me down a long corridor that spilled into a study or den. I followed his lead and noticed that he walked [illegible] and slightly lop-sided, proving he still suffered from his fall off the stage in Pasadena, California.

Nothing in the house seemed out of place, except in the den. There on a table in front of a chair, a newspaper lay open and turned to an article on me and my film collections [illegible]. Obviously, he had just been reading about my hobby. That was gratifying.

Three different life styles in this off-stage candid at Paramount. The film was THE ROAD TO SINGAPORE (1940). Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour are also pictured here. (courtesy Bob DeFlores)

Bing's career was always strong over the airwaves. (Courtesy Hollywood Revue)

A projector and screen had been set up ready for me. I put my film can down on the table and prepared for the screening. He asked if I knew how to operate the projector. I told him I did, and then showed him how it worked. Funny, he seemed to appreciate my instructions; apparently, no one had bothered to tell him how to run his own projector.

I had seen the films many times, so while showing them to him I had a chance to look around the room. Again, except for the newspaper everything in the room seemed to belong and fit, nothing crooked or dusty. Bing sat in a cushiony, dark brown leather reclining chair, and just past him, against a wall, a large leather sofa held luxuriously stuffed pillows about a foot thick. I could still see Bing's face from the light of the projector and it betrayed his seventy years, except for his eyes. They kept their youth and a bright

A very young Martha Raye joins Bing in WAIKIKI WEDDING (Paramount, 1937). (courtesy Bob DeFlores)

THE ROAD TO SINGAPORE (1940) launched the "Road" series for Bing and Bob Hope. (courtesy Bob DeFlores)

translucent blue hue, and when he watched the films they seemed to sparkle with delight and danced as he looked at every inch of the screen. After showing the films, not only did his eyes look younger, but he walked more sprightly and his entire countenance perked up — but I am ahead of my story.

Against another wall in the den stood a huge brick fireplace, and above it a mantlepiece supported, in solitary dignity, BING'S Oscar for the movie, GOING MY WAY. On the walls hung pictures of his family, Dixie Lee, and their children; Katheryne and their children; snapshots of Phil Harris and Bob Hope; and shots of fishing trips and golf forays and memories of the years. It was just Bing and I watching the movies. Alan Fisher and his wife busied themselves somewhere else in the mansion; Katheryne was performing in a play out of town and the children were gone somewhere. Bing just sat in my big chair, that and alone, watching films of himself taken thirty to fifty years earlier.

In every clip I showed him from 1929 through the late forties, he knew in an instant every other character in the sequence, and would call them out, sometimes adding a cute anecdote or touching story. I showed a rare clip of him at twenty-eight years of age, shot during "Star Night" at the Coconut Grove. It was a color short and the make-up was gaudy and overdone. Bing laughed at the sight but loved the clip because it included Mary Pickford, a favorite of the crooner's. I included another film of him, his mother and father, but this one also pictured Dwight Eisenhower, Ben Hogan, and Byron Nelson. Bing said he was unaware of a camera that day and the clip caught him by surprise, but he was happy someone recorded the event. Another film found Bing at his college graduation, standing next to Gonzaga University's basketball star, a seven-foot giant and school chum of the crooner's. He told me of some of his escapades and pranks with the giant. Crosby particularly liked my footage capturing him with comedians. He got a good laugh from a 1932 shot of George Burns and Gracie Allen and him, and he loved all the rare clips with Bob Hope or Jack Benny. Many of my clips showed Bing on the links with other notables, such as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and ex-Presidents and Statesmen. Bing knew everyone in the shots, even the caddies.

He showed his gratitude for the films which I personally had restored. He was genuinely pleased that someone cared enough.

While I changed one of the reels, he offered me a drink but he abstained so I declined. He also never fired his pipe while I was there. The only obvious trademark he kept was his sweater which looked very natural on him.

I showed a clip of Bing and Bob Hope at a bond rally. Hope had introduced Crosby as "Old Chub and Blub." Bing had never heard that introduction before and he turned to me with mock indignation and said, "Old Chub and Blub." Then he laughed. "I'll have to get Hope for that one," he said.

At the end of the two and a half hours of nostalgia and films, Bing turned to me again and said he would like all of what I showed him to be put on video tape for his files. Needless to say, I agreed and in retrospect I think he took a real liking to me because I never asked for our expected money for the clips. I was happy to give them to him. Then he asked about an article telling of my restoration of a 1929 motion picture of John McCormack, the great Irish tenor, called "Sing O' My Heart." I told him I still had it and he said he would love to see it one day because his mother collected all of McCormack's records. "We could see that," he added, "when I get back from Europe."

In between films, Bing would conjure up stories of the old days. He talked of Sennett and college and Paul Whiteman's Rythmn Boys and his life on celluloid. In one flashback, he told me he had made some comedies for the Christie Brothers. "No, you didn't, Bing," I said. Surprised, he said "Yes, I did, Bob!" I held: "No, you didn't. You made some Mack Sennett comedies at the Christie Brothers Studios, but you never made a film for the Christie Brothers." He stood firm and I let it drop. Later when he talked to the 3M people about our day together, I got my concession. He told one of the executives that he really enjoyed our meeting and that I knew more about his career than he did.

The last film I screened was a war bond rally in which Bing sang, "Buy, Buy, Buy, Buy a Bond." After I turned off the projector, we talked for another fifteen minutes or so and I told him that my children and I would love an autograph from him. He left the room with me following him toward the stairway. He told me to wait downstairs while he climbed the magnificent circular stairway to the second floor, singing and whistling all the way up, "Buy, Buy, Buy, Buy a Bond," replete with the familiar exploding "B's." He returned with three recent photos, signed to my daughters

and then gave me a signed piece of sheet music from the movie, PENNIES FROM HEAVEN.

I had been there about three hours and I felt he must be tired and I suggested that I go. He took my arm and said, "Nonsense, you don't have to go, do you?" I was pleased and said, "No, not really."

"Why don't I give you a tour of the house?" he said, and I jumped at the opportunity.

The entire house was immaculately kept and formal. Curtains and drapes flowed from ceiling to floor over every window, and the house was furnished with antiques. The dining room was large, sedate in design and formal. A beautiful table cloth with nice embroidery covered the long dining table and against the wall stood a buffet cabinet, elegant in its rich hand-carved wood and delicately supporting beautiful crystal glasses. Later, Alan Fisher told me that every night when the family was together, the Crosby's would dine formally; no jeans, no loose fitting golf shirts, formal attire only, and no nicknames. It was Nathaniel, not Nate, or Katherine, not Kathy. When he told me of the formalities, it seemed to fit the room.

Much of the house had rich carpets over the floor, but the hall floor was done in impressive stone. In one room upstairs, a closet encircled the entire chamber and in the closet, pressed one against the other, filling the whole enclosure, were suits, and on a shelf above the suits were hats, flashed one against the other, with no room left for a new purchase. Yes, they were got hats.

The walls of the house in nearly every room displayed paintings of the Old West, many of which were drawn by Charlie Russell. Many of the emphasis on western scenes dates back to Bing's parents, both from Minnesota. His father was a lumberjack who felled trees around the time the paintings depicted — late 1800's, early 1900's.

12

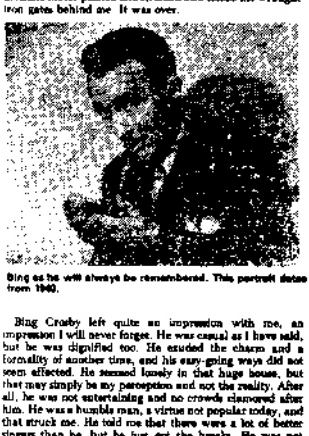
We walked outside to an enormous back yard that copied the front in its excellent care and the same feast of vivid green grass and giant trees. Before leaving the house, I asked if he would mind my taking a few photographs of us together. He at first seemed reluctant, then grabbed a golf hat and fitted it on his head. He did not want a picture taken without it. Outside, I caught the strong smell of summer flowers and pungent eucalyptus trees. It was late afternoon, but the temperature had not changed much. The breezes off the bay relaxed as the sun eased in intensity. We sat and talked at a wrought iron picnic table done in white and with matching chairs. Then we walked to his carriage house and as we moved away from his mansion I said, "Nice little lean-to you got there." He stopped, clasped my arm, "Bill Fields!" he said, recognizing the quote from W.C. Fields. Then he laughed, reflected a bit with an endearing smile, and walked on. The carriage house was a large, comfortable home where Alan Fisher and his wife lived.

The shadows of the tall trees spread over the grass and climbed up the side of the house as evening came on. It had been a long afternoon and we started back to the car. He asked me about a movie he made with Russ Columbo, another crooner, for Pathe and filmed at the Coconut Grove, called THE ROMANTIC RIVALS. I told him that after many years of searching I still could not find it and thought it to be lost, though I would never stop hunting for it. He thanked me and said that if I found it to let him know. I then told him of a rare clip featuring his first wife, Dixie Lee, impersonating her husband while singing "I Apologize." He did not know about the film and wanted me to get a copy for him and I said I would.

As we walked, Bing casually shuffled along with his hands stuffed in his pockets. His relaxed and quiet ways seemed to soothe everything around him, including me. As we walked to my car I said, "You sure have a beautiful home." He shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's comfortable, Bob, it's comfortable."

We walked to the car and Bing opened the door for me. I got in, sat down and closed the door. The window was open and Bing leaned his forearm on the door and said, "When I return from Europe, let's get together again and go over some more films, okay?" Of course okay. Then he asked if I liked to fish, and I said I was not very good. He let it drop.

As I pulled away from him, he stood alone in the driveway, waving, flanked by his magnificent house behind him and the beautiful lawn in front. I looked in the rear view mirror before passing by the gates, and he was still waving, then he turned and went into the house. The invisible motor pushed and strained and closed the wrought-iron gates behind me. It was over.



Bing as he will always be remembered. This portrait dates from 1940.

Bing Crosby left quite an impression with me, an impression I will never forget. He was casual as I have said, but he was dignified too. He exuded the charm and a formality of another time, and his easy-going ways did not seem affected. He seemed lonely in that huge house, but that may simply be my perception and not the reality. After all, he was not entertaining and no crowds clamored after him. He was a humble man, a virtue not popular today, and that struck me. He told me that there were a lot of better singers than he, but he just got the breaks. He was not fishing for compliments, but sincere in his estimation of his talent. Of course I disagreed. He just shrugged his shoulders.

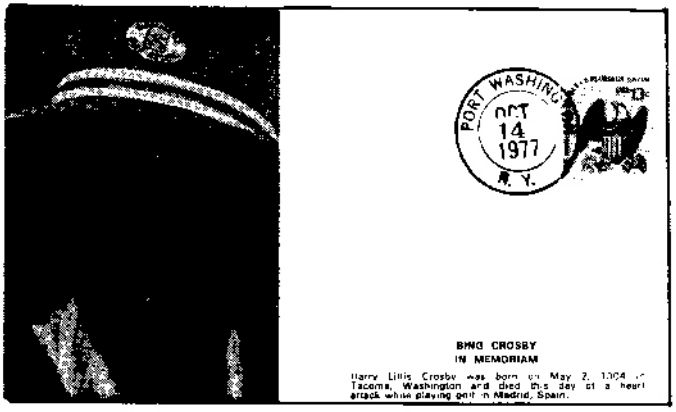
He never travelled far from his poor beginnings, at least in his mind. He empathized with those less fortunate. Fisher told me that it hurt him to hear people fight or to see old people abused. He felt a kinship with the poor and wanted to help them if he could. And to me he seemed unaffected and maybe slightly confused by his own good fortune, but not uneasy with it. Like his house, it was comfortable.

I felt close to Bing in that four and a half hours I spent with him. He drew me into his peaceful world and let me stay awhile.

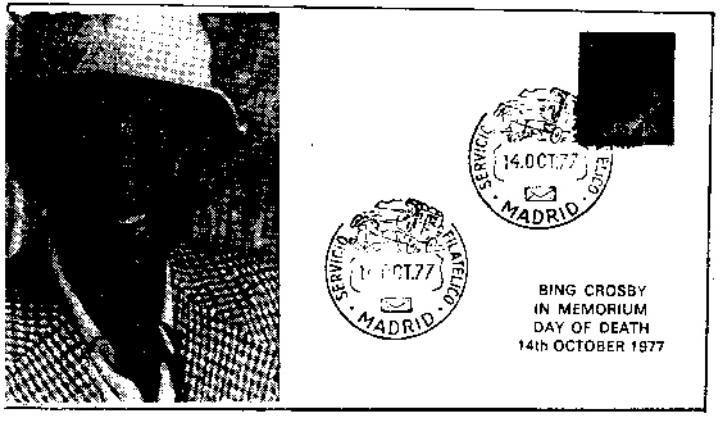
I remember he talked of one main worry that ruffled his calm. He was booked for a concert in Concord, his first in a very long time, and he worried that he would not draw the fans; he thought that they forgot him. Well, he did that concert, and the house was packed and fans were turned away at the door.

Bing loved seeing the old film clips of him and his friends. They brought him happiness. In fact, he told me that viewing those films were the most memorable hours he had spent in years. I know they were unforgettable hours for me.

I met him July 28th, 1977. We set up another meeting for sometime after his tour of Europe, but Bing never came back. On October 14, 1977, Bing died in Spain while walking off the eighteenth green of the Moraleja Golf Club near Madrid.



Two special First Day covers, issued a few months after Bing's death. The origin of these covers is a little obscure and both are unusual in that the picture of Bing is, in each case, an actual photograph affixed to the envelope! Does anyone have the full story?



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LETTERS
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From Francis X. Smith, New York

November 6th was truly a day to remember. For 24 hours there was nothing but Bing on one of our radio stations. Picture my frustration in driving along the highway with bumper to bumper traffic, the radio announcer indicating they were now going to have a quiz on the four song titles Bing sang in his movies which received Oscar Awards. A prize of dinner for two at the internationally famous Rainbow Grill in Rockefeller Center plus theatre tickets to several Broadway shows would be awarded to anyone who called in the correct answer within ten minutes. I could not get off the highway and find a phone, and by the time I reach an exit, several people had telephoned in with the correct answers!

From Frans van der Kolff, Amsterdam

Many thanks for the last issue of 'The Crosby Voice'. Full of interesting news - especially about the release of the four tracks recorded for RCA in 1960. I guess a lot will be said about the combination of these tracks with Bing's vintage recordings. I was lucky enough to obtain the original EP a few years back and I've often wondered why these songs haven't been coupled sometime with Bing's other RCA recordings of the late 1950's.

From Anne & John Watson, Auckland.

Anne and I get much pleasure from listening to the Kraft Music Hall shows from the club's library. We also find Bing's early recordings very interesting where his voice is not as deep as his later records. A happy New Year to all, and may this year be most successful.

From Richard Pearson, Arlington.

I have been trying to get publicity for the club here in the USA. Here's what happened. WEAM AM radio station plays 15 minutes of Bing on weekdays from 12.45 to 1.00 pm. They also play a 'Bing bash' (4 consecutive Bing numbers uninterrupted) on their Sunday evening 'Make Believe Ballroom' show. The announcer in the daytime is Bob Bassett; and in the evenings Rick Colom. I'm pleased to say that both announcers have mentioned the club after receiving letters from me. Rick's announcement turned up one new member: Charles Degges. I believe that we could get more if the society was plugged on a regular basis.

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BITS 'N' PIECES

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* Kathryn Crosby is disposing of all of Bing's household effects - books, records, letters, furniture - everything. The estate is being disposed of through a sales organization known as Corinthian Studios, 20506 Los Gatos Blvd, Saratoga, California 95070. Telephone number is (408) 867 4630. Unfortunately, it's personal buying only. You have to be there and pick out what you want as the Corinthians are not putting out a buying list. Not sure how much is still available. Apparently Kathryn started sending material there late last year.

* Stan Alexander, 24 Rosanna Street, Carnegie, Victoria (Telephone 568 6768) wishes to buy an old record player capable of playing 78 records. Stan says that any old machine will do, so if you have an old portable electric machine you're no longer using, give Stan a tinkle.

*Sad to note the recent passing of several people connected with Bing in one capacity or another. William Holden is one. He starred with Bing in 'The Country Girl' and also narrated the excellent two hour documentary on Bing's career produced a couple of seasons back. Natalie Wood is another. Whilst still a child star, she played Bing's daughter in "Just for You" in 1952. Sad also to note the passing of Hoagy Carmichael who wrote many a song for Bing over the years. Interesting, Hoagy, together with Mitchell Parrish not only wrote Stardust (which Bing recorded in 1931) but also "The White World of Winter" (which Bing recorded 34 years later in 1965.

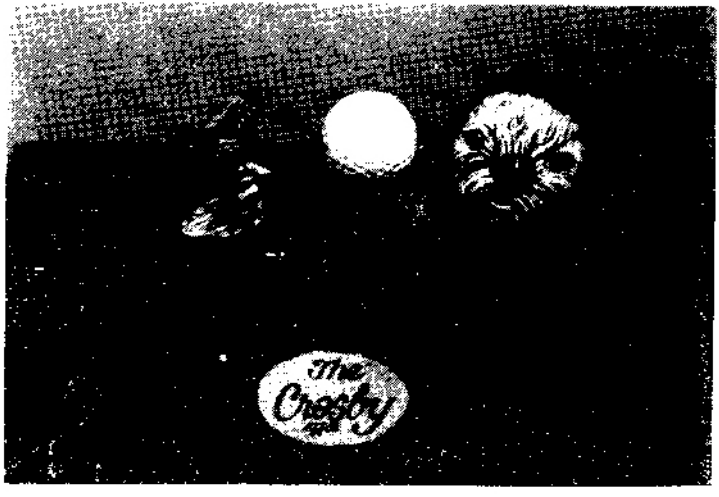
* 'Bing Crosby - The Hollow Man' is now available for sale in Melbourne in hard back form. This edition is imported from the UK and costs a little under $20.00. It is rumoured that a paperback version will be out sometime this year. Speaking of books, it is reported that Ken Barnes' "The Crosby Years" has been seen around town for as low as $6.99! That's about $25 less than before. Check around before you pay full price for a copy.

* Speaking of the 'Hollow Man' book, People magazine have been running excerpts from it recently.

* I should have said this in the introduction to this newsletter, but thank you to all those people who sent me Christmas cards last year. Your kind thoughts were really appreciated.

Bing Crosby and the celebrated Andrews Sisters provide an energetic tableau for our candid camera during their actual recording of "Yodelin' Jive."

...the decanter bottle, specially created for the 41st Bing Crosby ...Golf Tournament. Limited to just 1800 castings, the decanter ...ctually designed by Kathryn Crosby. For the full story, refer ...the text elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.



* The decanter you see at the bottom of the page opposite was sold by a company known as J & J Marketing. The blurb from the company, supplied to me by Vern Taylor reads: "Designed by Kathryn Crosby, this bottle depicts a sea otter holding a golf ball while resting on a simulated rock in Monterey Bay. The bottle is approximately 11" high by 8" wide. The sea otter is indigenous to the beautiful Monterey area of California where the prestigious Bing Crosby Pro-Am golf tournament is held each year with the proceeds going to Bing's favourite charities.
1800 of these unqiue decanters were cast and the mold destroyed. 500 bottles were made available to the Crosby Committee and will be received by the top pro-golfers, celebrities and business leaders who participate in the tournament. 1000 bottles were released through normal liquor channels internationally. The remaining 300 bottles are reserved for ASI collectors who otherwise could not get the bottle in the local market.
Each bottle has its individual registration number fired into the china and will be shipped with a certificate of authenticity."

I don't know whether any decanters remain for sale, but the cost is US$69.95, probably plus postage if you are ordering from overseas. J & J Marketing is at 833 Mahler Rd, Suite 17, Burlingame, California 94010 USA. Tel (415) 697 8611.

* Tim Morgereth, 1906 Codd Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21222 USA wants to buy, on any label, the following Crosby records: OKEH 40979, 41181, 41188, 41228. Also BRUNSWICK 20105, 20106 and 20109. Tim has a copy of the Ted Crosby biography for trade and promises to answer all enquiries.

* Kyoichi Muneta, 1-19-21 Nakakosaka, Higashi-Osaka 577, Japan wants the following Bing LP'S.

.LP 2000A.S.P. Chesterfield Show .LP 2001A.S.P. Philco Show .World Horizon - Sunday in Hollywood .Avenue 1018 - Bing at his extra speciale .Thorn Beach TB 1001 - The Impossible Pirates .Festival FL 30965 - Wilfred Thomas Show .Private Issue - Bing for collectors only .World Library of Sacred Music WLSM 26/5 - What Child is This .Decca DL5310 (10") Way Back Home.

* Well known Canadian broadcaster Gord Atkinson (who produced a series of one hour programmes on Bing under the title of "The Crosby Years" (different from the U.S. series) is currently writing a book under the same title. Should be worth reading. Watch these pages for details of publication and availability.

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OUR CURRENT U.S. MEMBERSHIP LIST
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Our U.S. membership continues to grow, thanks to the efforts of our rep. Richard Pearson, PO Box 1481, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

Kathryn Crosby, 1200 Jackling Drive, Hillsborough Ranch, Burligame, California 94010
Charles Baillie, 3230 La Encina Way, Pasadena, Cal. 91107
Cliff Brisbois, 4331 Ventura Cyn Ave, Apt 15, Sherman Oaks, Cal. 91423
Charles Degges Jr, 11730 Moffit Lane, Manassas, Va. 22111 (long lane!)
Michael Furruzza, 307 E. Ravine, Peoria, Ill. 61603
Richard Fromwiller, 53 Birkdale Rd, Cheektowaga, NY 14225
Ken Gray, 1155 Pinewood Dve, Pittsburgh Pa. 15243
Roger J Hackett, 4232 Herkimer Pl, Bronx, NY 10470
Gregg Hammond, 31 Lowell Dve, Framingdale, NY 11735
Robert Lundberg, 4333 S. 41st St, Apt 28, Tacoma, Wash. 98409
George McCabe, 4437 Colfex Ave S, Minneapolis MN 55409
Tim Morgereth, 1906 Codd Ave, Baltimore Md 21222
Robert Pasch, 114 Lancaster Lane, Lansing, Mich. 48906
Dave Rapp, 931 Decker Lane, Warminster, Pa. 18974
Mark Scrimger, 314 E. Main St, (PO Box 172) Parma, Mich. 49269
Francis Smith, Civil Court of the City of New York, 111 Centre St, N.Y. N.Y. 10013
Pat Sullivan, 1301 Sheridan, Apt 96, Chico Ca. 95926
Al Sutton, PO Box 8283, Sacramento, Ca. 95818
Mark Tocher, 785 Hanlon Rd, Guelph, Ontario, CANADA N1G 2S6 (whoops! I know Mark, I know! Canada is not a part of the USA!)
Ken Twiss, PO Box 8013, Tacoma, Wash. 98408
Vern Vasey, 6320 S.W. Cherryhill Dr. Beaverton, Oregon, 97005
Wig Wiggins, 5608 N 34th St, Arlington, Va 22207
Normal Wolfe, 145 15th St, NE, Apt 403, Atlanta Ga. 30361

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NEWS FROM THE BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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* A member in Seattle has printed a 1982 Bing Crosby Calendar as a donation to the society. We have one calendar each for member and non-members can buy them for US$8.00 each

* We had hoped to have Phil Harris at our 1982 Tribute but his offer to help out will have to be refused because unfortunately his fee is too high. I think we might get Alice Ludes, one of the 'Music Maids' to come however.

* Our long range goals include i) Aquisition of the birthplace of Bing and its restoration and use as a show case for Crosby memorabilia ii) The establishment of a living memorial to Bing in Tacoma, one idea being to establish a foundation to fund a project for helping children with congenital heart problems at Mary Bridge Hospital; iii) To become an international clearing house for information about the Crosby family, the first of whom came to the Northwest in the year 1845. iv) To hold an annual 'Tribute to Bing in Tacoma' and to issue a souvenir Tribute Record.

* The 1982 'Tribute' will be held on April 30th, 1982, a Friday. The Saturday event will probably be held in Seattle.

* BCHS has started a campaign to have issued a stamp homouring Bing.

* At BCHS there are no wages to pay. All help is most graciously volunteered. BCHS has no rent to pay as the office space is generously donated. We do however have fixed expenses such as utilities phone, stationery, printing and postage. Your membership is of great value to us. Membership is US$10 per year (+$1 for surface mail or $3 for air mail for overseas members.) Address letters to Ken Twiss at the address shown opposite.

* We have some neckties with the logo of Bing silk screened in gold. These are US$6.50 PP (in the USA. Add $1 for overseas surface mail) We also have a few ladies scarves for $5.00 (plus overseas postage)

* BCHS is getting world wide recognition. We now have members in 12 countries and new members are joining every month.

* BCHS featured in the 1981 Tacoma Christmas Torchlight Parade. Our contribution featured a 1922 Ford Model T pick-up, owned and driven by Bob and Joyce Lundberg. It was festively decorated with red, gold and green garlands with an outline of Bing covering the radiator. BCHS information was draped on the sides of the pick-up bed. A huge picture of Bing was propped up for all to see. This picture concealed a stereo player that continuously played Christmas music sung by Bing. Thirty thousand people lined the two mile parade route and enthusiastically clapped and shouted whenever Bob would honk one of the three old horns. The BCHS entry probably received the largest hand as it travelled the parade route.

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COLLECTOR'S
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ROSE OF MANDALAY (1928)

Back in the days when he was still an anonymous vocalist with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, Bing recorded a handful of solos (also anonymously) with other bands, notably Sam Lanin's Orch. and the Dorsey Brothers Orch.
This is one of the first, recorded on Dec. 28th, 1928. It was issued only in the US and the UK, and has only turned up on one LP - "Soft Lights and Sweet Music" on the Pelican label.

I SURRENDER DEAR (1931)

In 1931, Bing had his first real hit under his own name and this was it! Recorded on January 19th, it was only his fourth record with the Gus Arnheim band, and as you can see from the label, at the time of issue, Bing was barely past the stage of anonymous vocalist.
'I Surrender Dear' was an unusual record for its time - the notation 'Concert Fox Trot' signifies that this was hardly a dancing number!

THANKS (1933)

The title is a familiar one but the label will not be, at least to Australian members. This particular pressing of 'Thanks' (recorded Oct.27th, 1933) was actually issued several years after the original and was pressed for one of the department store chains in the USA. 'Thanks' was also reissued on such labels as Vocalion, Melotone and Banner.

ROAD TO HONG KONG (1961)

Jumping forward some thirty odd years, we come to an unfamiliar cover for a familiar LP. This is in fact the Japanese cover for 'Road to Hong Kong' and is of course, quite different from the Australian issue. Thanks to member Kyoichi Muneta who supplied us with a photograph of this one.

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TAPES FOR SALE
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For Bing's Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows on cassette, write to Jonathan Russell, 10 Roxburgh Rd, Westgate-on-sea, Kent CT8 8RX U.K.

For a whole variety of different Bing tapes, write for Arnold Baker's 'Tapes Exclusive' catalogue and enclose a couple of international reply paid coupons. The address: 48 Groomsport Rd, Bangor, Co Down, Northern Ireland, BT20 5LR, U.K.

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RECORDS FOR SALE
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Two Melbourne record shops offer discounts to members. These are The Bentleigh sewing and Record Centre, 348 Centre Rd, Bentleigh and Cunninghams, 80 Church St, Brighton. Say you're a member to get the discount.

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OTHER CROSBY SOCIETIES
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BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO Box 8013, Tacoma, Washington, USA 98408. President: Ken Twiss.

CLUB CROSBY, PO Box 8283, Sacramento, Ca. 95818. USA President/ Editor: Al Sutton.

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE, 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran NP 44 4PJ England. Editor: Reg Bristo.

KATHRYN CROSBY FAN CLUB, 1374 Broadway, Apt 7D, West Somerville, Ma. 02144, USA. President: Caroline Dawson.

THE SOUTHAMPTON BING CROSBY CLUB, 17 Edwina Close, Bitterne, Southampton, England. Editor: Jim Newell.

When writing to any of the above, it would be appreciated if you could enclose two or three international reply paid coupons with your letter. These are available from any Post Office and they do help to offset the enormous cost of postage these days.

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HOLIDAY INN REVISITED

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(The following are extracts from an article by David Hinckley which appeared in an American newspaper late last year. Apologies to whoever sent me this article - I've lost track of your name to give a credit!)

"A Holiday Treat Worth Waiting For"

I make relatively few unbreakable dates with the television set. I have one tonight when from 8 to 10 on "Movie Greats", Channel 5 is showing 'Holiday Inn'.

Now I realize that a public announcement of this sort may overstate somewhat the importance of the matter. After all, I also plan to eat dinner tonight, and I don't imagine that anyone , with the possibility of the takeout order girl at the Shankhai Gardens,cares about my saying so.

'Holiday Inn' is worth mentioning, however, for two reasons. First, it's a nice movie. Not 'Napolean' perhaps, but then Napolean couldn't sing like Bing Crosby or dance like Fred Astaire. Especially with his hand stuck in his shirt. Second, and more significantly, I suspect everyone has a movie that, more than any other, conjures the spirit of a particular season or event.

Over the years, 'Holiday Inn' has become a standard feature of my Christmas, and while it doesn't exactly make or break the season, things seem to go a little better the years I see it. Perhaps it's the Connecticut countryside - one of the prettiest snow-covered places on earth. Perhaps it's watching Bing Crosby at his sentimental finest - the kind of role that renders meaningless those nasty tales about how he behanved when the camera wasn't on.

Then there's the masterful decision to cast Fred Astaire as the villain. As if anyone who dances like that could ever harbour true evil in his heart. You know from the start that if Astaire is the villain, everyone's going to live happily ever after.

Okay, the story is thin. Anorexic, in fact. And the finale is a bit indulgent when the curtain to the outdoors is thrown open and suddenly Holiday Inn looks like the Ivory Snow Pavillion at the World's Fair. But somehow it all works, kindling the kind of sentiment that can warm large rooms. Sentiment so strong you can be sitting in front of the TV with tears trickling down your cheeks - an embarrassing occurence under any circumstances, unless it's raining in the room - and you don't even care if someone sees.

If you weep every day for the soaps of course, you may not feel such a singular impact from 'Holiday Inn', but in that case you can at least pay homage to its spiritual ancestor. It's easy, when you think about it, to envision 'Holiday Inn' as the pilot for a soap opera. Too easy, in fact. That's why I, for one, don't think about it at all.

I also don't think too hard about why I consider the movie almost entirely in connection with Christmas. As Paul Noble of Channel 5's "Movie Greats" series points out, it's actually about all the major holidays, and in fact, Astaire's wonderful firecracker dance marks the Fourth of July. What ties it so tightly to this particular season is all that Connecticut snow, I guess, plus the little matter of "White Christmas".

Bing first sang that song in this movie, as everyone who spent any part of the last forty years outside a Peruvian rain forest knows. During those years, the song so permeated the season that when the movie reaches that point, it's like being present for the invention of something awesome, like the law of gravity or running shoes.

For the record, Noble says, "Holiday Inn" opened Aug. 4, 1942, at the Paramount Theatre, on 43rd and Broadway. It was for the benefit of Navy Relief Fund, with personal appearances by Alice Faye, Zero Mostel, Jan Peerce, Connie Boswell, Xavier Cugat, Benny Goodman and Irving Berlin himself.

I wonder if they cried.

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SAGA OF THE MELBOURNE TRAM CONTINUED.

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Regular readers of these pages may remember that a few issues back we brought you the continuing saga of one of Melbourne's trams that had been purchased by a member of the Seattle (USA) council, one George Benson. It was Mr Benson's intention to set up a special line to run the trams as a tourist attraction by Seattle's waterfront. However, much like the problems that beset our trams in their home town, George Benson was to find that things would not be as simple as he thought. Newspaper headlines from the 'Seattle Post-Intelligencir tell the story of the last two years:

"WATERFRONT TROLLEY WAITS" (Sept 1980), "WATERFRONT OWNERS RALLY FOR TROLLEYS" (Oct. 1980), "TROLLEY CLANGS FOR ATTENTION TODAY" (Dec 1980), "PROPERTY OWNERS COME TO RESCUE OF STREETCARS" (May 81)

(To be continued!)

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FROM OUT OF THE PAST

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EXTRACTS FROM "BING CROSBY AND THE BING CROSBY STYLE" BY DR J T H MIZE.
(This remarkable book was published in 1946 by the Academy of American Music as one of a series of biographical booklets. It is almost certainly the most analytical book ever written about Bing.)

(From the section headed "Thirty Demonstrating Recordings, Annotated and Analyzed" comes this review of Bing's 1932 "St Louis Blues")

One Day early in 1932, Bing Crosby happened to be in the Brunswick recording studios when Duke Ellington's great Orchestra was filling a recording date. With their friendship growing out of reciprocal respect for genius, Duke invited Bing to hop up on the piano and join them in a rather impromptu but highly interesting rendition of W.C. Handy's St Louis Blues, a 12 inch recording on CO 55003 which serves as an early example of Bing's noodling and scat singing. Handy's classic composition is distinct in form, having three distinct and equally important movements or sections which we shall refer to as parts A, B and C. Part C is built on the traditional measure Blues harmonic progression...At slow blues tempo the recording opens with a four measure introduction featuring Harry Carney's slap-tongued baritone saxophone being echoed by the band chords....With saxophone organ moaning downward as background to Cootie Williams rather strident-toned trumpet solos on Part B, in good jazz style. Part A is presented by the slightly eccentric trombone of the late Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, played over pretty moving background by the sax section...A brief and delicate interlude by pianist Ellington prefaces Crosby's singing of Part B...Bing enters into this in one of his inimitable hummed tones, opening the strain (of the 'B' master) by placing a hummed n before and ; and though his blues singing is not in a class with specialists as Johnny Mercer, Jimmy Rushing, and Joe Turner, Bing does manifest a sympathetic understanding and execution of the vocal Blues...Background to the first of his two part B's offers prominent piano, Fred Guy's mandolin-effect guitar, baritone-saxophonist Carney's wanderings, and fill-ins by clarinetist Barney Bigard's loose-toned but liquid clarinet...With echo effects from Nanton's growling trombone, which he achieved with an oversized plunger mute, Bing sings Part A, which is really the opening strain of the composition; here Bing improvises in warmer style and almost really shouts the blues...Next comes Part C, with clarinetist Bigard

playing the obbligato behind Bing's delivery of the lamenting text... The trumpet section crescendos the band into double-time, which spotlights Otto Hardwick's flighty alto saxophone improvising, against dynamic-conscious brasses, this on the chords of Part C... The real treat follows when Bing scats Part C, against clipped chordal punctuations by the band...During the final four measures of this part the tempo retards and Bing moodily returns to Handy's blue words, against typically Ellingtonish piano chords, the recording closing with two measures of coda by the aggressive brasses... Worth several replayings are Bing's final words of 'And I love my baby' with a slow and deliberate tilt on 'baby' followed by 'Until I die' with a fondling of 'die'....After 15 years, neither the instrumentalists nor the vocalists' performance here is out of date.

(To really appreciate the above review, put on Bing's record of 'St Louis Blues' and follow it as the record progresses. It will add to your enjoyment of one of Bing's truly <u>great</u> records. BM)

(Next we have an anecdote from writer Carroll Carroll which appears in another part of the book.)

On a recent privately promoted and financed camp show tour with Phil Silvers and Rags Ragland, the early-rising Bing stuck his head through the green pullman curtains and called his companions for breakfast... improvising a light operatic strain to his ad lib lyric...'Phillsy... Raggedy...up you slug-a-beds...the dawn's atop the telegraph wires and the bacon to the egg aspires.' Heads popped out of every berth in the car and a bald-headed critic at the far end hollered, "Listen Buddy, it's too early in the morning for cheap imitations of Bing Crosby.."

(And finally:) In Nick Kenny's interesting little book, 'How to Write, Sing and Sell Popular Songs', Bing offers the following revealing advice to aspiring vocalists: "Don't overlook the importance of phrasing. Learn to throw away a musical line that you would ordinarily punch and vice-versa. Don't let your singing audience be a few notes ahead of you regarding shading and timing. They like to be surprised. A song is like a bucking bronco. You've got to break it in - sing it a hundred times in different ways."

That's all for this issue of The Crosby Voice.
I hope to meet you at our next meeting on
April 19th - should be a great evening.

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society. P.O. Box 422, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205, Australia.